

January 29, 2004

## Bush Scaling Back Dollars for Third World

By ELIZABETH BECKER

**W**ASHINGTON, Jan. 28 — [President Bush](#) plans to scale back requests for money to fight AIDS and poverty in the third world, putting off for several years the fulfillment of his pledges to eventually spend more than \$20 billion on these programs.

Hardest hit would be the United Nations-supported Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, whose contribution from the United States would drop to \$200 million in fiscal year 2005 from \$550 million, according to Congressional officials who have been briefed on the president's budget proposal.

Over all, however, Mr. Bush's programs to combat AIDS and poverty to the world's poorest nations still represent a big leap from those of the Clinton administration.

The financing request to fight AIDS for the 2005 fiscal year would be nearly \$2.7 billion. That includes an increase for bilateral programs to \$2.5 billion from \$1.9 billion. That is still less than the \$3 billion expected when Mr. Bush promised in his State of the Union address last year to increase financing for combating H.I.V. and AIDS by \$15 billion over the next five years.

"I would love to see the administration match the figures outlined in the president's speech," said Patrick Cronin, the former assistant administrator at the United States Agency for International Development. "But for all of our quibbling, this is a serious commitment and these figures are still very good."

Nonprofit aid organizations complained on Wednesday that while the request represented an overall increase for some countries, it would be a blow to international cooperation in the fight against AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

"That's robbing Peter to pay Paul," said Jamie Drummond, executive director of DATA, a nonprofit organization created by the Irish rock star Bono to help Africa. "We will work with Congress to increase the contribution to the fund."

In the fiscal 2004 budget, Congress more than doubled the administration's original request of \$200 million, giving the fund \$550 million.

Richard G. A. Feachem, the executive director of the Global Fund, said in a telephone interview from Geneva that the United States is the single largest donor to the fund.

"The United States is a very generous supporter and I do not believe it will diminish its contributions and will fully support the excellent work we are doing in 121 countries," he said.

The request for Millennium Challenge Account, a new development initiative that requires poor nations to meet criteria of good government in order to receive aid, will be \$2.5 billion, down from the \$3.3 billion expected this year.

At a conference in 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico, Mr. Bush had promised to increase America's foreign aid budget by 15 percent a year — or \$5 billion over three years, the first real expansion in more than a decade.

Mr. Bush has highlighted the programs in his fund-raising speeches. He told an audience in St. Louis, this month that his administration had accepted its global duties to fight "disease, and starvation, and hopeless poverty."

"On the continent of Africa, this great country is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men, and women, and children now suffering with AIDS," he said. "This great, compassionate land is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue."

John Brennan, spokesman for Bread for the World, a nonprofit aid organization, said that Mr. Bush should match those words with higher financing figures.

"They are still short and I believe the president should live up to his original promises," Mr. Brennan said.